

METHOD TO REMOVE FLUORINE
RESIDUE FROM BOND PADS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a method of fabricating a semiconductor device, and more particularly, to a method of removing residual fluorine oxide compound, $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$, from aluminum-containing bond pad surfaces.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] After the terminal metal bond pads are defined and etched on a semiconductor wafer, a passivation layer, generally SiO_2 and SiN , is deposited on the wafer to protect the bond pads from the subsequent manufacturing process steps. In some products, a cost-effective polyimide, one kind of photoresist coated on plasma enhanced SiN (also referred to as PESN, which is a SiN film deposited using plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (CVD) process), is used to define the pattern of passivation layer and remains as residue on the wafer surface after passivation removal etching step. The residue left behind by the cost-effective polyimide is fluorine rich and the fluorine reacts with aluminum of the bond pads, producing $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$. Fluorine acts as an oxidizing agent and produces undesirable oxide deposits, $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$, on the bond pads. The AlFO_3 deposits on the bond pads are not desirable because they result in non-optimal wire bonds and cause the affected wafers to fail quality control wire-bondability testing. This type of defects are non-reworkable and the wafers are scrapped.

[0003] Another source of the troublesome AlFO_3 oxide deposits are associated with the etching of the silicon nitride protective passivation layer from the wafer during a pad mask patterning step at the end of the wafer processing. The silicon nitride passivation layer is etched with a dry/plasma etch performed in fluorine containing gases, such as CHF_3 , CF_4 , C_2F_6 , C_2F_2 , C_4F_8 , etc. After a wafer has undergone the pad mask patterning step, residual fluorine may remain on the bond pads from the fluorine containing etch chemicals used in the dry/plasma etch process. This fluorine residue on the aluminum-containing bond pads produces undesirable oxide deposits, $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$.

[0004] One known solution to this problem is removing the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits by argon plasma etching in the presence of a plasma enhancing carrier gas, such as carbon dioxide, or an inert gas, such as, helium, xenon, neon, krypton, etc. However, this argon plasma etching

is a physical etching method and does not always satisfactorily remove the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] A method is disclosed herein for effectively removing the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits from aluminum-containing bond pads during a semiconductor wafer processing utilizing an improved active plasma etching that combines physical etching and chemical etching. The active plasma feed gas can be $\text{SF}_6/\text{CF}_4/\text{Ar}$ or $\text{Cl}_2/\text{BCL}_3/\text{Ar}$ or other gas that can form a plasma capable of etching $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits. Plasma etching utilizing these feed gas is more effective in removing the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits because the SF_6/CF_4 and Cl_2/BCL_3 components of the plasma provide chemical etching that complements the physical etching of argon plasma. Another advantage of the active plasma etching is that the resulting Al bond pad surfaces are smoother when compared to those surfaces cleaned with the conventional inert gas plasma etching, such as argon plasma etch.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] The invention will be better understood from the following detailed description of an exemplary embodiment thereof in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0007] Figure 1 is a schematic cross-section of a bond pad on which is disposed an undesired $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit; and

[0008] Figure 2 is a schematic cross-section of the bond pad of Figure 1, after the undesired $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit has been removed, according to the process of the present invention.

[0009] Features shown in the above referenced drawings are not intended to be drawn to scale, nor are they intended to be shown in precise positional relationship.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0010] Figure 1 is a schematic cross-section illustrating a typical aluminum-containing bond pad on a semiconductor wafer contaminated with an undesirable $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit.

An aluminum-containing bond pad 20 is comprised, for example, of aluminum or aluminum alloy and disposed on a substrate 10 on which has been grown an oxide layer 12 of a semiconductor device. Bond pad 20 is covered by a passivation layer 14, typically silicon nitride, into which an opening has been etched to expose bond pad 20. On the surface of bond pad 20 is an undesirable contaminant $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22. $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22 is typically formed by the residual fluorine left behind by the silicon nitride etching process which is typically a dry/plasma etch performed in fluorine containing gases, such as CHF_3 , CF_4 , C_2F_6 , C_2F_2 , C_4F_8 , etc.

[0011] Figure 2 illustrates bond pad 20 of Figure 1, after the undesirable contaminant $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22 has been removed by the process of the present invention leaving a substantially clean bond pad 20.

[0012] According to the present invention, the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit removal etch step is preferably performed just after the dry/plasma etching of the silicon nitride passivation layer 14. This additional etch is preferably performed in situ, i.e., in the same etch chamber as the silicon nitride passivation layer etch. The in situ process is both convenient and cost effective because it utilizes the existing manufacturing equipment and thus minimize the added manufacture process time associated with removal of $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22.

[0013] According to one embodiment of the present invention $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22 is removed by reactive ion etch using $\text{SF}_6/\text{CF}_4/\text{Ar}$ feed gas. This feed gas formulation provides a combination of physical and chemical etching of $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposit 22. The inert gas component, Argon, of the plasma is the physical etching gas and provides the physical etching. The halogen containing gas, SF_6/CF_4 , of the plasma is the chemical etching gas and provides the chemical etching.

[0014] The reactive ion etch step is preferably conducted at about 200 mT chamber pressure and about 700 W power. The feed gas, $\text{SF}_6/\text{CF}_4/\text{Ar}$, may be provided into the chamber as a mixture in the desired ratio by using a pumping speed of 5-15 cc per minute at standard condition (SCCM) for SF_6 , 10-30 sccm for CF_4 , and 70-200 SCCM for Ar. The etch duration should be sufficiently long to ensure removal of the $\text{Al}_x\text{F}_y\text{O}_z$ oxide deposits from the aluminum-containing bond pad. For the recipe of the feed gas provided herein, the time duration should be at least 60 seconds. Preferably the etch duration should be about 120 seconds with the feed gas

mixture of 10 SCCM/20 SCCM/135 SCCM for SF₆/CF₄/Ar, respectively. In another embodiment of the present invention, Cl₂/BCL₃ may be used as the chemical etching gas component of the plasma feed gas along with the argon gas.

[0015] Regardless of the particular plasma gas used for the reactive ion etch step described above, some F or Cl residue is likely to be left on the bond pads and the polyimide passivation covered surface of the wafer. In an embodiment of the present invention where SF₆/CF₄/Ar is used for the reactive ion etch step, a cleaning process that partially removes the polyimide passivation layer from the wafer surface may be sufficient to remove any fluorine-based residue. A low energy O₂ plasma may be used to partially etch the surface of the polyimide passivation layer and remove any surface contamination. In an embodiment of the present invention where Cl₂/BCL₃/Ar is used for the reactive ion etch step, additional cleaning steps may be necessary to remove Cl-based elements because Cl₂ attacks aluminum. CF₄ plasma may be utilized to induce exchanging of Cl with less reactive F. Then, a low energy O₂ plasma may be used to partially etch the surface of the polyimide passivation layer and remove any surface contamination including the F that just displaced the Cl. If the low energy O₂ plasma etching is not sufficient to remove all residue from the plasma gas, a high energy O₂ plasma may be used to strip off the polyimide passivation layer and apply a new polyimide passivation layer.

[0016] While the foregoing invention has been described with reference to the above embodiments, various modifications and changes can be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, reactive ion etch utilizing other mixture of feed gases to accomplish a combination of physical and chemical etching of Al_xF_yO_z oxide deposit by the active plasma are considered to be within the scope of the invention defined by the appended claims.